

Remarks

Ambassador Lewis A. Lukens

Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation Grant Signing Ceremony

Thiès Governorate

November 12, 2013

[As prepared]

As the Ambassador of the United States to Senegal, it is my honor to present to the Musée de Thiès this grant from the Ambassadors' Fund for Cultural Preservation, in the amount of nine million, seven hundred and thirty thousand francs CFA, for the documentation and preservation of the traditional music of the Sereer-None community.

The representatives of the community here today have preserved the rich musical tradition of the None people that was passed on from their parents and ancestors. Through this program, their voices will be recorded for posterity, preserving a timeless digital record of fifty of the traditional songs that accompany the most important ceremonies of the community. This digital record will be housed at the Musée de Thiès, and shared on DVDs with researchers and archivists throughout Senegal and abroad. The grant will also support the creation of new musical instruments using traditional methods, allowing your master craftsmen to pass their knowledge on to their apprentices. The U.S. Embassy is honored to play a supporting role in maintaining Senegal's traditions as your country leads Africa into the 21st century.

This is the first grant from the Ambassadors' Fund during my tenure in Senegal, but we will continue to explore opportunities with the Ministry of Culture and with Senegalese academics to ensure that future generations of Senegalese and visitors from abroad can access this rich and diverse historical record. The Fund supports not only the preservation of traditional forms of music, dance, and language, but also archaeological treasures that are in danger of disappearing. In Africa, as in the United States, many of these treasures predate the colonial period, so I encourage the historians and archaeologists of Senegal to let our Embassy know where there are opportunities to restore those sites that some have forgotten.

In closing, Mr. Minister, distinguished guests, I would like to thank the Musée de Thiès, the city and governorate of Thiès, and the Ministry of Culture for involving the U.S. Embassy in this important work. And to the Sereer-None people, may your traditions guide you toward a bright future.